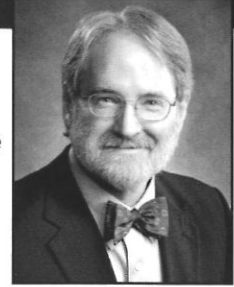


A Profile in Balance

By James G. McGiffin, Jr., Esquire



Have Fun, Do Good, Do Well: Shakuntla L. Bhaya

If I aspire to be the best lawyer I can be, I must first try to be the best person I can be. I am fortunate to know many lawyers who have succeeded in their work, in part, because they are excellent people. During the course of this year, The Journal will feature an article on one such lawyer. Each featured lawyer will exemplify the art of balance in life. I have learned much from these people. Perhaps readers will also benefit.

-Jim McGiffin

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One of Delaware's unpretentious trail blazers is Shakuntla L. Bhaya. Shaku was born in New York City and moved with her family to North Wilmington when she was a child. She graduated from the University of Delaware and from Northeastern University School of Law hoping to make the world a better place. She found work with The Legal Clinic (an early form of her current firm), practicing family law. Her first assignment was in the Dover office of The Legal Clinic, but Shaku found the state capitol culturally unsatisfactory in the mid-1980s ("There was no place to eat"). She relocated to the Elsmere office. Other things changed, too. She now concentrates on personal injury and worker's compensation work, and she is a name partner. The Legal Clinic is now known as Doroshow, Pasquale, Krawitz & Bhaya. She has done well.

For Shaku, doing well is not enough. "I believe lawyers have an obligation to give back to the community," she says, and her actions speak this belief forcefully. A former president of the Delaware Trial Lawyers Association and as an active member, she has spent many hours working to preserve the right of

Delawareans access to the courthouse. Shaku has also devoted much of her time and energy to social issues impacting children, women and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community. She was involved with the Grassroots Citizens for Children and worked to establish the Office of the Child Advocate in Delaware. In fact, she accepted the first case handled for that office by

been committed and it has to be fixed. It's selfish—it brings me joy."

Joy is certainly a priority for this woman of many interests. "I believe in laughter," she admits. She loves spending time at her Sussex County beach getaway. She enjoys conversation with people she knows well and with people she just met. She loves to dine out, whether at coffee shops or nice restaurants. Shaku is a big fan of the Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival, where she will watch a dozen movies over a few days. Family, too, brings Shaku much joy. She lives close to her parents and three siblings, and they are an important part of her life. Shaku has been with her partner, Cathy, for 30 years, and together they have a child (now an adult, but to a parent, always a child). Family, she says, has made her a better person and a better lawyer.

Shaku thinks of herself as a member of the "village" that is Delaware, and she embraces the responsibilities and the joys incumbent on a village member. It helps that she finds everyone approachable, including governmental leaders. It also helps that in Delaware, "Everybody wants to get it right." The Delaware Bar, and the state itself, is fortunate to have Shaku to blaze trails and open doors, even if she is reluctant to claim credit. And, Shaku considers herself fortunate to have Delaware as her home. She makes the most of the entire State—New Castle County is where she works, Kent County is where she politics, and Sussex County is where she parties. And, she is not hard to find. Just listen for the laughter. ☺



Family picture at Shaku and Cathy's Civil Union on 2/18/12.
Photo credit for both photos: Barbara Proud

private counsel. She has been a leader at the YWCA, where she finds the mission of empowering women and eliminating racism to be wholly consistent with her own values. Shaku worked hard with members of the General Assembly for the legislation that outlawed discrimination based on sexual orientation and that recognized civil unions. Shaku explains, "I need to be working where a wrong has